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PRINCE KONOYE'S MEMOIRS

By Kiyoshi K. Kawakami

The authentic Japanese text of Prince Konoye's Memoirs, now available in Tokyo, bids us ponder the question whether the Pacific War could have been avoided. For a long time to come no clear-cut answer may be forthcoming. In due course, however, the world will hear from the tireless seekers of historical truth. Charles A. Beard's American Foreign Policy in the Making, just published, is undoubtedly only a forerunner of many other studies which will make clear much that has been mysterious.

Six years ago, the Japanese Government, despite the clamor of some militarist hot-heads, was anxious to remain at peace with the United States. Japan had sunk deep in the mire of the Chinese War from which all Japanese, including the Army, were eager to extricate it. The Army, indeed, had approached Chungking for peace through various channels at various times. But to make peace with Chungking it was necessary for Tokyo to enter into some understanding with Washington, for it was American support which encouraged China to reject such peace overtures as had been made by Japan. Of course, the quickest way to liquidate the China War would have been for Japan simply to pull out of China, making no fuss about terms. But the Army insisted that Japan obtain conditions under which it would not lose face too seriously.

The Konoye Memoirs, read in this light, become the more significant. We are told that in the early stages of Prince Konoye's effort to conciliate America both the Army and Navy supported him heartily. It was an Army officer, Colonel Iwakuro, who came to America late in 1939 to explore possibilities of a rapprochement. The first American he consulted was Bishop James E. Walsh, of Maryknoll Seminary. The Catholic prelate had visited Japan a few months earlier and had urged upon influential Japanese the imperativeness of preserving peace in the Pacific. Through the Bishop's good offices Iwakuro conferred with Postmaster General Frank C. Walker. No doubt Mr. Walker kept the White House informed of the progress of the conversations, while Colonel Iwakuro was in close touch with the Japanese Embassy.

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By April, 1941, these private talks had crystallized in a tentative plan for the readjustment of American-Japanese relations, and on April 16, Secretary Hull informed Ambassador Nomura that he was willing to open conversations with him on the basis of that plan. [Text in Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941, Vol. II, pp. 398-402.] The plan envisaged a meeting between President Roosevelt and Premier Konoye to expedite speedy agreement.

On April 18, the Konoye Cabinet, with the exception of Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka, then on his way home from Berlin, unanimously decided in favor of negotiations on the above basis. But before this decision was communicated to Ambassador Nomura, Matsuoka arrived in Tokyo and immediately launched obstructive maneuvers. When at last, on May 12, Matsuoka instructed Nomura to open conversations with Mr. Hull, the Foreign Minister had written into the American plan such serious revisions as to render the Ambassador's task difficult. Significantly, Matsuoka vetoed the plan for Konoye's meeting with President Roosevelt. Furthermore, he secretly informed Berlin as to the negotiations between Tokyo and Washington.

Matsuoka's intransigence seemed a matter of personal pique, though the Konoye Memoirs do not say so. On his way to and from Berlin, Matsuoka had stopped at Moscow, where he had intimate talks with Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt, his classmate at Oregon University. There he had asked the American envoy to arrange a meeting with President Roosevelt for a friendly discussion of American-Japanese problems. Had Mr. Hull's overture of April 16 been the result of those Moscow talks, Matsuoka undoubtedly would have accepted it at once. When he learned that the overture had originated in an entirely different manner he was plainly chagrined.

This poses a number of grave questions. Why had Konoye taken into his Cabinet Matsuoka, with whom the Prime Minister was ideologically and temperamentally incompatible? Why could not the Cabinet override Matsuoka, who was the only obstructionist? Was Matsuoka playing the game of the younger Army officers who were known to be critical of Tojo's apparent willingness to go along with the Cabinet? One looks in vain for the answers in the Konoye Memoirs.

Before his death, on June 27 of this year, Matsuoka told his defense attorney his side of the story, partly in refutation of the Konoye Memoirs. Most Japanese will probably accept Konoye's version rather than Matsuoka's -- such is the relative Japanese estimate of the two characters.

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Due largely to Matsuoka's personal diplomacy, the Hull-Nomura conversations came to a virtual standstill, while the German Government moved heaven and earth to frustrate them. By July 18, the situation had become so ominous that Konoye at last ousted Matsuoka, and proposed a personal meeting with President Roosevelt, in the hope of breaking the deadlock. On August 17, Ambassador Nomura reported that the President was favorably disposed toward the proposal and had gone so far as to suggest Juneau, Alaska, as the meeting place. On August 28, the President again told Nomura that "he hoped to confer with Prince Konoye for about three days."

On the evening of the same day, however, Secretary Hull told Nomura that the proposed meeting should be preceded by "an agreement in principle on the principal questions" involved. In reading the Konoye Memoirs one gets the impression that Secretary Hull and the Department of State put a brake on Mr. Roosevelt's willingness to meet with Konoye. Throughout the protracted pourparlers, Mr. Hull insisted upon Japan's acceptance of what he termed "four fundamental principles": (1) respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each and all nations; (2) non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; (3) equality of nations, including equality of commercial opportunity; (4) non-disturbance of the status quo in the Pacific.

On the other hand, Ambassador Joseph C. Grew, at Tokyo, having closely observed the mental idiosyncrasies of the Japanese for ten years, warned his Government against this dogmatic approach, and recommended the President's meeting with Konoye. "Should the United States," said Mr. Grew, "expect or await agreement by the Japanese Government, in the present preliminary conversations, to clear-cut commitments . . . almost certainly the conversations will drag along indefinitely and unproductively until the Konoye Cabinet and its supporting elements . . . will come to the conclusion that . . . the United States Government is only playing for time."

What the Ambassador feared had already come to pass, for War Minister Tojo, who supported Konoye at first, soon became increasingly intransigent, insisting that further negotiations with America were useless. Yet Konoye did not lose hope. One of his assets was the Navy's continued loyalty to him. He seemed reasonably confident that if he could only talk with the President an agreement could be signed, and that once signed he could make it effective even in the teeth of militarist opposition. Possibly he intended to invoke Hirohito's aid, even as Premier Suzuki invoked it for surrender four years later.

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One reason for Konoye's eagerness for direct negotiations with President Roosevelt was, according to Mr. Grew, that the Japanese Foreign Office, though rid of Matsuoka, was still honeycombed with pro-Axis elements who "would not scruple to reveal both to the Germans and the Japanese extremists any information which would render the present Cabinet's position untenable." Grew felt that "Prince Konoye is in a position, in direct negotiations with President Roosevelt, to offer him assurances which, because of their far-reaching nature, will not fail to satisfy the United States."

Konoye, apparently, was prepared to render innocuous Japan's alliance with Germany and Italy, in the event of America's declaration of war against the Axis Powers, provided Washington would offer some plausible explanation that Germany had fired the first shot.

In regard to China, Konoye was ready to offer President Roosevelt immediate withdrawal of a major portion of the Japanese Army, leaving for the time being relatively small forces at certain northern points. He does not say it in so many words; one gathers it from scattered phrases in the Memoirs. Gradual evacuation, instead of the complete and immediate withdrawal demanded by the United States, was deemed necessary to temper the Army's opposition and its possible "explosion."

Boiled down, the question is this: Would it not have been the better part of wisdom for the Department of State to have given Konoye an opportunity to put into effect the plan he had conceived to preserve peace? Had Japan been thus kept quiet in the Pacific, the United States could have addressed itself entirely to the Atlantic-Mediterranean situation, thus defeating Germany and Italy more quickly. After victory in Europe, if Japan had not redeemed all pledges made in regard to China, then the United States, Great Britain and Russia could have jointly confronted the Tokyo Government and made it toe the line.

We may, therefore, pertinently quote Mr. Grew once more:

> "The Ambassador raises the question whether the United States is not now given the opportunity to halt Japan's program without war or an immediate risk of war, and further whether, through failure to use the present opportunity, the United States will not face a greatly increased risk of war."

Events have proved these words, of September 29, 1941, prophetic.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. III, NO. 37

By Frank C. Hanighen September 11, 1946

Secretary Byrnes' speech at Stuttgart was perhaps the most constructive official utterance on American foreign policy since the end of the war. Much study and discussion had been expended on its composition during the past six weeks. Byrnes had consulted President Truman by telephone, warning him that the speech might "blow up" the Peace Conference in Paris. Truman, however, gave Byrnes his official blessing, and with the favorable popular reaction to the speech the Stuttgart policy received the final seal of American approval.

The speech is an important move in the struggle not only for the body but for the soul of Germany. Byrnes' message came as the first promise of hope to the German people since V-E Day. To a population faced with the bitter alternatives of prolonged poverty under Western rule, or Communism under Russia, the Stuttgart speech opened the perspective of a return to the traditional civilization of the West, as well as material rehabilitation.

Byrnes' suggestion that part of Eastern Germany, now under Polish control, might be handed back to a unified democratic Germany may prove to have been the most important part of the historic speech. For one thing, this means that undernourished "rump Germany" can now hope to retrieve its former bread-basket -- the only surplus food area in pre-war Germany. For another, the miserable German refugees from that area will have Uncle Sam, and not Uncle Joe, to thank if they should regain their homelands. These two thoughts constitute very concrete psychological nourishment for the despairing population of Germany.

As a challenge to Russia, Byrnes' words were effectively and cleverly planned. They achieved one of the principal aims of all politicians -- be they ward bosses or world statesmen -- namely: "put your adversary in a position where anything he does is wrong." For instance, if Russia wants to call Byrnes' bid to the Germans, or to raise it, Russian statesmen will have to offer to a united Germany the areas now under Poland. But that will provoke the Poles to discontent, signs of which indeed are already reported from Warsaw. On the other hand, if Russia fails to make such an offer, Russian and Communist prestige in the Eastern Zone will sag. Byrnes, as a matter of fact, at Stuttgart may have been trying to forestall some such bids by Moscow.

Additionally, it has been little noticed that Byrnes adroitly said that he would back up Russia's annexation of Koenigsberg and parts of East Prussia, unless Russia changes her mind about that matter. This also puts Russia on the spot. Either Moscow must announce permanent annexation of that formerly German territory, which would cause a further loss of Russian influence in the Eastern Zone, or Russia would have to give back to Germany a highly strategic area. Byrnes' "fast ones" indeed confront Russia with difficult alternatives.

Another point in the speech has escaped the eye of most commentators. Byrnes, while reiterating his endorsement of the Potsdam and Level-of-Industry ("pastoralization" policy) Agreements, seems to have found a loophole for their evasion. The Secretary implied that the Germans will be free to create peaceful industries over and above the minimum standards prescribed and that the latter are not permanent. In neither of these Agreements is there any word or phrase which admits of this possibility. Byrnes must have known this and is laying the groundwork for gradual nullification of these two points in the documents. Thus, while the speech was primarily political, it contains great economic possibilities.

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Governor Dewey last week sacrificed Republican chances in the U. S. Senate, in the opinion of Republican circles in Washington. At the New York Republican Convention Dewey obtained the Senatorial nomination for his favorite, Majority Leader Irving Ives of the New York Assembly. Before the Convention, Dewey had tried to get General Drum, his military adviser in the 1944 Presidential race, to run as Senator, and had energetically opposed General "Wild Bill" Donovan's bid for the nomination. Drum, at the last minute before the Convention, refused to take the nomination. Ives triumphed over Donovan.

Ives is regarded as an able man, but is comparatively unknown to most voters and has not the "pulling power" that Drum or Donovan would have had. Also he is pitted against former Governor Lehman, the Democratic nominee for Senator, a popular figure with a long record of vote-getting. Since the Republican Party is anxious to win the Senate and the New York seat was considered one of the nine seats necessary, many Republicans believe that Dewey was selfish in insisting on his "own man."

Republican strategists are critical of Dewey's footwork. He should have secured a firm pledge from Drum to run. Adequate political preparation was lacking in this matter, it is pointed out, as it was in Dewey's Governorship campaign in 1938. In that year, the rejection of Broderick of Rochester for Lieutenant Governor and substitution of Senator Bontecou was considered a factor in the defeat of Dewey.

Another exception taken to Dewey's management of the campaign may or may not prove valid. It has been customary in New York state to maintain a group and geographical balance among the personalities on the Party tickets; that is, there is an effort to distribute nominations among Jews, Protestants and Catholics and among up-state and New York City men. It is noteworthy that the Democratic slate goes much further to meet this requirement than the Republican. It is headed by a Catholic, Mead (who comes from Buffalo), and includes an Italian-American, Di Giovanna, candidate for Attorney General. The Republican slate conspicuously lacks representatives of these two important groups. The election results should help to show whether this old political custom still affects voting strength.

Majority opinion among all observers is that Dewey himself will win as Governor. Jim Farley, it is said, predicts a Dewey victory. Even circles around David Dubinsky, boss of the Liberal Party which is opposing Dewey, say that Dewey will triumph by 300,000 votes, but they add that Lehman will defeat Ives. Cautious observers look for a close fight.

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The Zionists have now shifted their position in Palestine to support of the principle of "partition" which they formerly opposed, according to diplomatic circles in Washington. The Zionists, it is true, qualify this by insisting on controlling immigration in the proposed Jewish Zone. The British Government rejects this qualification. But the general Zionist strategy seems to be to obtain complete control of part of Palestine, presumably in the hope that this will later lead to gradual absorption of the remainder of the area. The Arabs, scenting this aim, take a position against partition. In view of both attitudes, observers are pessimistic about the fate of the conference on Palestine now meeting in London.

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The shipping strike has paradoxically bolstered the prestige of the AFL, while at the same time lowering that of AFL President William Green. The completeness of the strike and the thoroughness of the tie-up by the AFL Seafarers Union stands in sharp contrast to the failure of the recent Great Lakes strike pulled by the CIO National Maritime Union.

As for Green, it is believed that he could have prevented the strike or have stopped it once begun, with White House blessing. Green was strongly advised by AFL

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leaders, notably John L. Lewis, to withdraw the AFL delegate to the War Stabilization Board, which has opposed the strikers' demands. This at once would have made the Board inoperative. (Lewis successfully pulled the same trick in 1941 in the captive mines strike.) AFL leaders told Green that the White House was ready to override the WSB. With the WSB out of the way, the Maritime Commission could automatically take over the matter and allow the Seafarers Union the increases.

Green's "lack of guts," as hard-boiled labor leaders put it, is a subject of much discussion among AFL leaders. At the recent Chicago meeting of the AFL Executive Board, Green was described as disinclined to outline any positive AFL strategy. Before that meeting, Green's re-election as President at the October Convention was regarded as certain. Now, the more dynamic personalities of the AFL are reconsidering and discussing the replacement of Green. Green's failure to act promptly in the shipping strike is another argument for his retirement. Would the successor be Bill Hutcheson of the Carpenters, or Matthew Woll? No one knows. But, with the decline of the CIO, many AFL leaders believe the time is ripe to win back a large part of the CIO.

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The silence of the State Department on the subject of last week's Chilean elections is eloquent with embarrassment. Not a word has come from Assistant Secretary Spruille Braden, usually so vocal on the rights and wrongs of internal Latin American politics. The dismal facts are as follows: Gonzalez Videla, the Radical (for "Radical" read "Social Democratic") candidate won a plurality for the Presidency, largely as a result of Communist Party support. Chilean Communists frankly proclaim that they will not fight against Russia in any future war. The runner-up was Cruz Coke, extreme Right-Wing Conservative and regarded as "anti-Yanqui." The third candidate, who trailed, was the Liberal Party's leader Fernando Alessandri. He was backed by his father, former President Arturo Alessandri, who has the reputation of being anti-American and who opposed Chile's entry into World War II. The decision, since Videla has no majority, lies in the lap of the Chilean Congress, which meets soon. But Videla is at present regarded as the favorite.

Thus, the most likely winner is a man who is mortgaged to the Communist Party; and the other two candidates are both "anti-Washington," in a category with Perón whom Braden classified as "Fascist." There looms the uncomfortable possibility that, if Videla becomes President, Chile's vote in the UN Assembly may be cast against United States policy and in favor of Russia.

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The refusal of the Longshoremen's Union to load the ship "Bartlesville Victory" with UNRRA supplies for Yugoslavia is symptomatic of public opposition to sending American goods to countries "unfriendly to the United States." This public reaction is all the more general because of the spreading of many stories -- some well-founded, others not -- throughout the country about the export of various goods which American consumers need badly.

This column has received the details of one authentic case in New England. A prominent citizen in that area went to a lumber yard to buy some 2x4's for repairing his house. He found the yard well stocked with this and other sizes. But the proprietor of the yard declined to sell. He revealed that he had contracted to deliver all his stock, held at that time, to Russia; that the United States Government had allocated large supplies of lumber for export to Russia; and that he was receiving such an attractive price that he could not afford to sell his merchandise even on the American black market. Inasmuch as Russia has enormous reserves of timber and the lumber supply situation in America is critical, some explanation from the Government would seem to be in order.

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Notes and Quotes

Carleton Beals, contributor to HUMAN EVENTS and widely-known publicist on Latin America, writes from Buenos Aires to the Progressive: "[Argentina's] economic life is expanding. Since the June 4, 1943, revolution, it has made tremendous progress in social legislation and better living conditions for the masses; it is moving toward the recovery of foreign owned utilities and certain other key industries.

"In spirit and practice I should say that Argentina, at the moment, is probably the most 'democratic' country in Latin America. It is quite as democratic as Mexico, Guatemala or Colombia. The traveller is subjected to no passport exactions and no constant police molestation as in Chile, Peru, and most of the countries. Nor is Argentina's expansion wholly along political and economic lines; it has a vivid intellectual life. It is one of the great publishing centers of the world."

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Political trials, like that at Nuremberg, tend to enable the defendants at times to score more telling points than the prosecution. In his final plea on August 31, Goering said: "However, international law is uniform. The same has to apply for both sides. Therefore if everything that is happening in Germany because of the occupying powers -- if all those things are admissible under international law -- then previously as far as France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Yugoslavia and Greece are concerned, Germany found herself in the same position.

"If today the Geneva Convention so far as the Germans are concerned does not have any validity any longer, if today in all parts of Germany industry is being dismantled and other great assets . . . taken to other states, if today the money of millions of Germans is being confiscated and other serious restrictions of freedom are taking place, then measures like that taken by Germany in the countries above mentioned cannot have been criminal on the part of Germany."

And Von Ribbentrop, doubtless looking at the Russians on the judges' bench, said in his defense: "When I went to Marshal Stalin in Moscow in 1939 he did not discuss with me the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the German-Polish conflict on the basis of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Rather he let me see that if, in addition to half of Poland and the Baltic countries and Lithuania, he did not receive the harbor of Lithuania, I might as well return. The conduct of the war in 1939 was not considered an international crime. Otherwise I could not repeat, nor explain Stalin's telegram at the end of the Polish campaign, which read: 'The friendship of Germany and the Soviet Union is based on the blood that has been shed commonly, and has all prospects of being enduring and steadfast.'"

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A witty reporter last week asked Assistant Secretary of State Will Clayton: "Does the State Department take the view that the visit of the Argentine battleship to New York was an attempt to influence the New York primary elections?"

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"Marx was a rationalist. With Socrates, and with Kant, he believed in human reason as the basis of the unity of mankind. But his doctrine that our opinions are determined by class interest hastened the decline of this belief. Like Hegel's doctrine that our ideas are determined by national interests and traditions, Marx's doctrine tended to undermine the rationalist belief in reason. Thus threatened both from the right and from the left, a rationalist attitude to social and economic questions could hardly resist when historicist prophecy and oracular irrationalism made a frontal attack on it. This is why the conflict between rationalism and irrationalism has become the most important intellectual, and perhaps even moral issue of our time." K. R. Popper, in Polemic, 1946.

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